

## **Focus Group Discussion Guide - DRAFT**

### **Introduction:**

**(5 minutes)**

- a. Introduction of facilitators
- b. Introduction of project
- c. Explain purpose of focus group
- d. Stress confidentiality and anonymity (including participants' responsibility to maintain each other's confidentiality) and explain consent form
- e. Introduce recording equipment, explain purpose and request permission to record
- f. Monitoring form: explain purpose and confidentiality
- g. Set ground rules for discussion
- h. Ask participants to introduce themselves (first names only)

b. and c. As you may know, the Health Board of Lewis & Clark County set up a task force that is exploring how we could implement universal health care in the county. We'd like to speak to you today about your views on health care, your health needs and your experiences with the health care system here. We would also welcome any ideas you may have about health care in Lewis & Clark County. The task force will produce a report that will include a summary of what we hear from you at this meeting and the other meetings we're holding across the county.

### **1. Let's talk about how you and your family have used health care here in the county. OR ASK ABOUT "PEOPLE THEY KNOW" (35 minutes)**

- a. When you think of the health care you have needed, what kind of services seemed easy to get in your community? What kind of services seemed particularly difficult to get? PROBE:
  - Regular primary care doctor? Community health clinics that provide basic care?
  - Specialists? Hospitals? ERs?
  - Early responders, e.g. in cases of injuries and accidents (911)?
  - Home visits by nurses or other health workers (e.g. nutritionists, meals on wheels)?
  - Preventive care at schools (screenings etc.)
  - Occupational therapists and physical therapists?
  - Mental health or substance abuse services?
  - Family planning, pre-natal and post-natal care?
  - Dental care?
  - Vision care?
- b. Have you ever had any problems accessing health care? (ASK AS A GO-AROUND – EVERYONE TO COMMENT), WRITE ON BOARD. GROUP RESPONSES, PROBE IF ONE AREA DOESN'T GET MENTIONED
  - [Access:] Do you have insurance? Is it adequate insurance – does it cover what you need? Difficulties of paying for care, premiums, co-pays, deductibles? Is care affordable? Is it easy to get care?
  - [Availability:] Do you have a doctor? Is it easy to get to a doctor? Do you have to travel far to get care? Do you have to wait for appointments? [Are there sufficient doctors, hospitals, dentists, pharmacies?]

- [Acceptability:] Do you get clear information from your doctors/insurers? Are you being treated with respect and dignity? Is your privacy respected? Translation/interpretation [IF RELEVANT]? Responsive to your needs?
  - [Quality:] Do you use screenings and check-ups? Are you happy with your nurse or doctor, the time you get with them? Do you think the care you get is right for your needs?
  - [Accountability]: When something goes wrong, is it easy to talk to your insurer/doctor etc. to figure out the problem? Do you feel you have a say in the way health care works here in the county?
- c. In your experience, what can make it easier for you to get care, and what can make it more difficult?

2. We've talked a lot about health care. **Let's now talk about your health more generally, as it relates to your life here in Lewis & Clark County.** (SKIP IF ADDRESSED UNDER #2) (15 min)

- a. Do you feel this is a good area to live in if you want to be as healthy as possible, or not? Why?
- b. In your view, is there anything that prevents you from being healthier? What is it? PROBE: transportation (car dependency), environmental issues, not enough fresh food in stores, not enough money to buy healthy food, feeling of stress because of lack of money or risk of losing job, long working hours, poor working conditions, not having regular check-ups etc.

3. We mentioned at the beginning that the County's Board of Health appointed a group of residents, the Health Care Task Force, to look into improving the way people get health care here in the county. Let's talk a bit about that. (30 minutes)

- a. As far as you know, do all people here in Lewis & Clark County get the same kind of access to health care, or not?
  - i. If there are differences, what are these? PROBE on income, employment/occupation, geographic location, age [kids and older people are eligible for public programs]. Why are there differences?
- b. Do you personally know people who have real problems getting the health care they need? Why do they have difficulties? [OR REVISIT DIFFICULTIES MENTIONED UNDER 1.]
- c. The Board of Health seeks to improve the way people get health care because they recognize health care as a human right. They also believe that government – national, state and local - has a responsibility to protect this right by ensuring that everyone can get the health care they need. **What do you think about government having a responsibility to ensure that everyone gets care, like it does for schools** (or for fire and police services)?
- d. Do you believe that health care is a human right? (ASK AS A GO-AROUND – EVERYONE TO COMMENT) For those who agree: what does that mean for you? Would the differences in people's ability to get care - which we talked about earlier - be a human rights violation? For those who disagree, why not? PROBE: If health care is not a right, then who should get access and who should not?
- e. Given that Lewis & Clark County wants to ensure that everyone can get the health care they need, **what in your view are the most pressing issues the County should address?**
  - PROBE: insurance, costs/affordability, lack of doctors (primary/specialist), distance/transportation

4. [OPTIONAL, TIME PERMITTING ] If you could change anything about how you get health care, what would it be? (15 minutes)

a. COLLECT IDEAS

b. [OPTIONAL QUESTION, DEPENDENT ON ANSWERS TO Q2 and TIME] We'd like to show you an idea from a State Senator from Helena. She proposed adding a right to health care to the Montana constitution as a first step to improve access to health care. What do you think about this idea? DISTRIBUTE TEXT OF AMENDMENT.

*Proposed new section in the Montana constitution:*

*Section 36. Right to health care. It is the goal of the people and the duty of the legislature to establish a comprehensive system of quality health care that is accessible to each person regardless of ability to pay, includes all reasonable and necessary preventive, remedial, rehabilitative, and palliative care, and affords each person an equal opportunity to exercise the inalienable right to the highest attainable standard of health.*

*For your information, the Montana constitution currently reads:*

*Section 3. Inalienable rights. All persons are born free and have certain inalienable rights. They include the right to a clean and healthful environment and the rights of pursuing life's basic necessities, enjoying and defending their lives and liberties, acquiring, possessing and protecting property, and seeking their safety, health and happiness in all lawful ways. In enjoying these rights, all persons recognize corresponding responsibilities.*